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L E T T E R

TO THE

PEOPLE OF THE JEWS.

[PRICE ONE SHILLING.]

1850



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The Author's Present

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L E T T E R

TO THE

PEOPLE OF THE JEWS.

BY THE REVEREND

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CANTERBURY.

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A
L E T T E R, &c.

BRETHREN of the stock of ABRAHAM, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises ; whose are the Fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all God blessed for ever. *Amen.*—Ye were some little time ago publicly addrest*, under the hope of prevailing on some of you to

* See a Letter to the Jews, by Dr. Priestley.

B

embrace

embrace Christianity; but ye have, it is said, answered, “that when the several preachers of it shall agree on what Christianity is, ye will then receive it.” Now, as ye would probably deem any man, who was convinced of the divine mission of MOSES, very absurd, were he to refuse acknowledging it until your Rabbins cease to differ on what are truly traditions from him, what not such, ye cannot reasonably, merely on the plea of our disagreement on some points, continue to reject what we all preach, “that JESUS of Nazareth is the CHRIST of God, and must be obeyed as that Prophet, who MOSES said would come into the world, threatening that every soul which did not hearken to Him, should fall under the judgment of the Lord.”—This was what the earliest disciples of JESUS called on your fathers to receive, ere Jerusalem was laid waste, and given to be trodden down by the Gentiles: nor (if this be acknowledged) is there any thing contained

tained in the Gospel, absolutely inconsistent with your present faith. Think not that, like him who hath already addressed you, I mean, by considering one passage of the apostolic writings as spurious, another as of no importance, and a third as generally misinterpreted, to get rid of whatever it might seem to me, ye would not receive. I cannot conceive, that in a Revelation of the will of God, committed to writing for the instruction of mankind, His providence would permit there to be such an intermixture of mistakes, interpolations, and passages requiring great subtlety of wit rightly to understand them, as to render it scarcely possible for a plain man, who receives language in its usual signification, not to err in endeavouring to form from it a just notion of the faith it teaches.— It is to the little ground ye have for prejudice against the real doctrine of the Church, (not against that of those who have left the Church,) and the great similarity between your own

Creed and ours, in the important articles concerning God and a Saviour, and of which the writer above alluded to appears to have been totally uninformed, or unaware, that I wish first to call your attention. Now the second of the thirteen articles of your Belief, as delivered by R. MOSES, affirms, that, "While God is One, and Indivisible, yet He is of an Unity peculiar to Himself alone."—Such is the very Unity which we believe, undestroyed by the co-existence of His eternal Word, and Spirit, with the Father: for as to the Personal Unity for which the disciples of Arius, Socinus, and Mahomet, contend, that existeth in every individual of His creatures, and consequently cannot be that which this article asserts.—In the fifth of the same articles, it is affirmed, "that none but God is the object of divine adoration, and that no created being ought to be worshipped as a Mediator or Intercessor." *Our* Gospel saith the same, and the Ministers of the

the *Church* still maintain what PAUL the Apostle, in conformity with ancient Scriptures, taught, "That CHRIST, the "One Mediator, is the Son of God."—That the Lord God would come to Zion, and that, besides Him, there is no Saviour, is repeatedly asserted by your prophets; and ISAIAH, in his lxiⁱⁱⁱ chapter, teacheth also, that MESSIAH is mighty to save. The Royal Psalmist, Pf. cx. speaks of the MESSIAH as his Lord; and Pf. ii. expressly as the Son of God. Now, if there be no Saviour but God, and yet MESSIAH be mighty to save, He must be God; and that He is so, by being the Son, the Scripture teacheth us by the passages above quoted, compared with Pf. xlv. 6. where the MESSIAH is thus addressed: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; "and the sceptre of Thy kingdom is a "right sceptre!" For that there existeth the WORD, who is also called the Son of God, your fathers had learned, and the most famous of your Doctors, both ancient and modern, have delivered,

vered, as ye may learn by consulting (and surely, in a case of such importance, nothing material should be left unconsulted) their works*. And the other part of what we maintain, that the MESSIAH was to appear in humility, and suffer for the sins of the people, thus bringing salvation by a mode by which the greater part of the nation would little expect it, is established by the words of ISAIAH, ch. lii. 13. & liii. “Behold, my servant shall

* The Jewish testimonies to the doctrines of the Divinity of the MESSIAH, and the Trinity in the Divine Nature, are set forth very amply by the learned Dr. ALLIX, to whose work little can be added, but by the actual repetition of particular passages; and I think the reader will not be displeased with this, in one instance:—PHILO, the celebrated apologist for the laws and religion of his nation, in speaking of the cherubim whose wings overshadowed the ark, says, “But I would say, that there were figuratively signified the two most ancient and supreme powers of the necessarily existent Being, the Creative and the Regal; now the Creative Power itself, by which He founded, and made, and adorned, this universe, is called GOD,” (here is seen exactly the doctrine of St. JOHN, “The Word was GOD,”) “and the Regal, by which he governeth the things that are made, LORD.”

—Κυριος, (Compare 2 Cor. iii. 17.) Ο δε Κυριος το πνευμα εστιν.

“deal

“ deal prudently. He shall be ex-
 “ alted, and extolled, and be very high.
 “ As many were astonished at thee,
 “ (his visage was so marred more than
 “ any man, and his form more than
 “ the sons of men) so shall He sprinkle
 “ many nations. The kings shall shut
 “ their mouths at him : for that which
 “ had not been told them, shall they
 “ see, and that which they had not
 “ heard, shall they consider. Who
 “ hath believed our report? and to
 “ whom hath the arm of the Lord
 “ been revealed? For He shall grow up
 “ before Him as a tender plant, and as
 “ a root out of a dry ground : He hath
 “ no form, nor comeliness ; and when
 “ we shall see Him, there is no beauty
 “ that we should desire Him. He is
 “ despised, and rejected of men ; a
 “ man of sorrows, and acquainted with
 “ grief : and we hid, as it were, our
 “ faces from him : He was despised,
 “ and we esteemed Him not. Surely
 “ He hath borne our griefs, and carried
 “ our sorrows : yet we did esteem Him

“ stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for
“ our transgressions, He was bruised
“ for our iniquities: the chastisement
“ of our peace was upon Him; and
“ with His stripes we are healed. All
“ we, like sheep, have gone astray;
“ we have turned every one to his own
“ way; and the Lord hath laid on Him
“ the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He
“ opened not His mouth: He is brought
“ as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a
“ sheep before her shearers is dumb,
“ so He openeth not His mouth. He
“ was taken from prison, and from
“ judgment: and who shall declare His
“ generation? For He was cut off out
“ of the land of the living: for the
“ transgression of my people was He
“ stricken.”—The remarkable manner
in which this and other prophecies are
applicable to JESUS of Nazareth, hath
prevailed on some of your brethren to
entertain an opinion that two Messiahs
are spoken of, the one suffering, the
other

other triumphant; but this hypothesis is overthrown by the consideration, that since JESUS affirmed Himself to be the only CHRIST, He must be such, or an impostor: while that He was the former, we have the following proofs:— It is written in the xlixth chapter of the Book of GENESIS, that your father JACOB, in blessing his son JUDAH, declared, that “the sceptre should not depart from him, nor a law-giver from between his feet, till SHILOH should come, and the peoples were gathered unto Him*.” That the sceptre is departed from JUDAH, and has been for many ages, is evident; therefore, either this prediction of the Patriarch hath failed, or SHILOH (which in your Talmud is reckoned among the names of the MESSIAH, and by which the Targums acknowledge He is meant) is come. But the former, no real Jew would presume to assert, while, in ad-

* That such is the more proper translation of the passage, and its true sense, the reader may see proved by the very learned and able MEDE, in his Eighth Discourse.

dition to this, there is another specification of the time determined for His appearance given by the prophet HAGGAI, that God would make the glory of the latter Temple greater than that of the former, and give peace therein, *Hagg.* ch. ii.—A prophecy that was by your fathers understood of the coming of the MESSIAH, and confirmed as such by that of *Malachi*, iii. 1. “The Lord
 “whom ye seek shall suddenly come to
 “His temple.”—The mode in which your teachers attempt to evade the dilemma arising from these texts, by saying, that the accomplishment of the prophecies they contain is only deferred on account of your sins, agrees not with the words of the prophets, who did not menace a delay of the MESSIAH’s coming on your trespasses, but destruction on those who would not receive Him. Thus the Lord said by MOSES,
 “I will raise them up a Prophet from
 “among their brethren, like unto thee,
 “and will put my words in His mouth,
 “and He shall speak unto them all that
 “I shall

“ I shall command Him : and it shall
 “ come to pass, that whosoever will
 “ will not hearken to my words that
 “ He shall speak in my name, I will
 “ require it of him.” *Deut.* ch. xviii.
 ver. 18, 19.

Of how much your nation now suffers, or of how much ye have suffered since the appearance of JESUS CHRIST, and the spreading of His Gospel among the Gentiles, ye need not be reminded. So long have ye been without a King, and without a Prince, and without a Sacrifice, and without an Image, and without an Ephod, and without Teraphim, the only question to be determined is, Whether your fathers rejection of Him filled up the measure of your nation's iniquities, and drew down the divine wrath on them and their children, according to their own daring words, “ His blood be upon us and
 “ our children !” To determine this then, consider how accurately His character answered the character of that Prophet. He spake of Himself alway

as of Him who was sent, that is, SHILOH (שִׁלֹחַ).—Before His manifestation unto Israel, JOHN the Baptist spake of Him to the people in these words: “There
 “standeth one among you, whom ye
 “know not. He it is who, coming
 “after me, is preferred before me.”
 So truly did He arise from among His brethren, that at first they distinguished Him not from any other. Like MOSES, the people having followed Him into a desert place, He fed them by miracle. Like him, He gave them from a mountain a set of precepts, speaking with authority, as One to whom the people had been forewarned that they should hearken. He declared, that the words which he spake, he spake not of Himself, but that the Father which sent Him gave Him commandment what He should say, and what He should speak. Thus accurately answering the description given by MOSES, That He should speak the words of the Father in the Father’s name; and appealing to
 to

to it for the justice of His claim*. "Search the Scriptures," said He: "for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of Me." And again, "Had ye believed in MOSES, ye would believe in me; for he wrote of me."—Compare, then, I beseech you, what He said with what MOSES wrote, and consider whether He be not the Prophet of whom he spake. Study, with the attention they merit, the Law and the Prophets, and when ye have from them gained just notions of the character of the MESSIAH, of the period within which He was to appear, of what He was to do, and what He was to suffer, examine the history of JESUS' appearance on earth; and, as ye find the several particulars of that correspond with what was afore-time written of the CHRIST, acknowledge Him

* Some Socinian writers appear not to have seen this admirable correspondence in its due light, since they consider some of the texts in which our blessed Lord alludes expressly to the character of which MOSES prophesied, as formal proofs of his disclaiming a divine nature.

to be the SON OF GOD. Do not suffer yourselves to be misled by a vicious example, nor listen to the plea which was too successfully urged in the day of your fathers, and helped to subject them to the wrath they experienced. "Have any of the Rulers or the Pharisees believed on Him?"—The deliverance to be given in Mount Sion and in Jerufalem, it was declared by the prophet JOEL, should be in a Remnant whom the Lord should call, *Joel* ii. 32. And if your Rabbins would dissuade you, on their own authority, from receiving our Gospel as true, recollect that, among the curses denounced by the Prophets against your nation, the following is recorded, *Ezek.* vii. 26. "The Law shall perish from the Priests, and Council from the Ancients." So that, at this time, when all the curses menaced against you seem to have taken full effect, your Teachers rejecting JESUS is an argument of his truth, otherwise the Law and Council would not be perished from them. But, if
 9 you

you think that JESUS did through craft use such terms in speaking of Himself, as might make Him appear to answer the character of the MESSIAH, recollect that there is one particular of that character mentioned by ISAIAH, and alluded to by the PSALMIST and other Prophets, "that He should pour out His soul unto death," which no impostor would wish to act, because it must put an end to all his hopes in this world, and in another such an one could have no hope. Yet of this JESUS spake to His disciples as necessarily to be undergone by Himself, ere the prophecies relating to the MESSIAH could be fully accomplished in Him: "Behold, we go up to Jerufalem, and all things that are written by the Prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished: for He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on, and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death."

Luke xviii. 31, 32, 33.—Not one of the
false

false Christs, who have at different times appeared, ever appealed to this proof of his own truth, yet the several parts of it (let me not seem tedious unto you, in again repeating passages of so great importance) are thus laid down by the Prophet:—"He is despised and "rejected of men. We hid, as it "were, our faces from Him. He was "despised, and we esteemed Him not." *I/. liii. 3.*—accomplished when P. PILATE said unto the people, "Whom "shall I release unto you, BARABBAS, "or JESUS who is called CHRIST?" and they said, "BARABBAS." And when clothed in mock robes, and with a crown of thorns, in lieu of justly estimating His sufferings, and the meekness with which He bare them, in return to PILATE'S words, "Behold your King!" they cried out, "Away with Him! "Away with Him! Crucify Him!" And when he asked, "Shall I crucify "your King?" the Chief Priests answered, "We have no King but "CÆSAR." Thus was He despised, and
rejected.

rejected.—Again, “ Surely (saith the
 “ prophet) He hath borne our griefs,
 “ and carried our sorrows. He was
 “ wounded for our transgressions, and
 “ with His stripes we are healed. He
 “ was oppressed, He was afflicted, He
 “ was brought as a lamb to the slaugh-
 “ ter, and He was cut off out of the
 “ land of the living.”—Fulfilled, when
 PILATE, having scourged JESUS, deli-
 vered Him to be crucified; and the
 Roman soldiers, having platted a crown
 of thorns, put it on His head, mocked
 Him, smote Him on the head, and spit
 on Him, and led Him out and crucified
 Him.

But if, in return to these proofs of
 the prophecies having been accom-
 plished in JESUS of Nazareth, ye
 should have heard it suggested, that,
 “ although it must be admitted that He
 “ was thus delivered to the Gentiles,
 “ yet many circumstances of His pas-
 “ sion might only, by the craft of His
 “ followers, be accommodated to the
 “ predictions concerning the CHRIST,”

D

—recollect

—recollect that the accomplishment of the prophecies, that the Gentiles should, through Him, come to the knowledge of the One true God, the God of your fathers, ABRAHAM, ISAAC, and JACOB, and of that of the sceptre then departing from Judah, required something more to bring it about, than merely their willingness to have it fall in with their Master's claim.—That the Gentiles should, through CHRIST, come to the knowledge of the Truth, ISAIAH foretold, “Behold my Servant whom I uphold, mine Elect in whom my soul delighteth. I have put my Spirit upon Him: He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.” *Is.* xlii. 1. —And ver. 6. “I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles.”—And that the preachers of the Gospel had planted it, so that it gained ground on every side, (thus gathering the peoples unto JESUS,) ere Jerusalem was over-

overthrown by the Romans, is an undeniable fact. Behold now, how large a portion of the inhabitants of the earth, which were before sunk in idolatry, have learned to give glory to the God of ISRAEL.—This very circumstance is a proof that the MESSIAH is come; and its having been effected through those whom JESUS sent to preach, makes it moreover a proof that He is CHRIST.

But if even this seem not satisfactory, behold another, which should be irresistible. God gave unto your fathers a token, whereby they might always discern whether He had sent a prophet, or, whether that character was presumptuously assumed. When God gave that promise, which I have already quoted, of raising up a Prophet like unto MOSES, and threatened to punish every soul that would not hearken unto Him, to repress impious pretensions to this character, He added, “ But the
 “ prophet which shall presume to speak
 “ a word in my name, which I have

“not commanded him to speak, or
 “shall speak in the name of other
 “gods, even that prophet shall die.
 “And if thou say in thine heart, How
 “shall we know the word which the
 “Lord hath not spoken? When a pro-
 “phet speaketh in the name of the
 “Lord, if the thing follow not, nor
 “come to pass, that is the thing which
 “the Lord hath not spoken, but the
 “prophet hath spoken it presump-
 “tuously.” Now, in consonance with
 this token, so expressly laid down in
 the law, JESUS foretold to his Disciples
 not only His own Death and Resurrec-
 tion, but that it was one of the Twelve
 who should betray Him: “That (saith
 “He) when it shall come to pass, ye
 “may believe that I am He.”—When,
 then, He had given them this sign, if
 they were deceived, they must have
 been willing to impose on themselves,
 and throw away their lives for what
 they knew was a false claim. Neither
 have we their report only of their
 Master’s words being verified, in proof

of His being a true Prophet, but something to which we ourselves can testify. He foretold the overthrow of your ancient city, (accurately as it is described by JOSEPHUS, who was present at the siege,) and the dispersion of your people into all nations, and their continuing so dispersed, and this, as to happen within the compass of the generation to which He spake,—a limitation mentioned by no prophet but Himself and DANIEL: so that ye must acknowledge, either that He was a true Prophet, or that He borrowed this from DANIEL: and then it will follow that DANIEL, whose testimony unto JESUS is so full, was a true one, whence the former conclusion will equally result, that JESUS was likewise true.

Suffer not then yourselves, I beseech you, to be misled to reject this only just inference, by a persuasion that your ritual law was to be of everlasting duration. God declared, by the prophet JEREMIAH, that “ He would make
“ a new covenant with the House of
“ ISRAEL;

“ ISRAEL; not according to the covenant which He made with their fathers, when He brought them out of the land of Egypt.” *Jer.* xxxi. 31, 32.

—Now the promise of a new covenant sheweth that the former should wax old and vanish away; while that it hath done so, appeareth from fact, your nation having been removed from that place, where alone part of the ritual law could be duly performed, a greater number of ages than your fathers passed in it.—Neither listen to those who teach, that if the law had been repealed, the repeal would have been signified in a mode similar to that in which the law was first given, by a Voice out of the midst of the Cloud, attended with the same august symptoms of the Divine Presence: for this is directly contrary to what the Lord declared by MOSES, when your fathers, trembling at the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, said unto him, “ Speak thou with us, and we will
“ hear;

“hear; but let not God speak with us,
 “lest we die.” For then the Lord said
 unto him, “They have well spoken,
 “that which they have spoken: I will
 “raise them up a Prophet from among
 “their brethren, like unto thee,” &c.
Deut. xviii. 17, 18.—It was therefore
 by no other mode, than through
 a Prophet of exactly the character of
 JESUS, that the law of MOSES was to
 be succeeded by a new covenant, by
 which, indeed, it was not so properly
 repealed as fulfilled, having all its types
 accomplished in realities; while, though
 the new law was not spoken from the
 midst of the Cloud and the Fire, the
 Presence of the God of ISRAEL was no
 less powerfully shewn, by those won-
 derous works which the Prophet had
 declared should be done, when God
 should come. *I/. xxxv. 5, 6.*—“The
 “eyes of the Blind were opened, and
 “the ears of the Deaf were unstopped:
 “the Lame Man leapt as an Hart, and
 “the Tongue of the Dumb sang.”

To

To conclude then, Behold, at one view, the sceptre is departed from Judah, and the Gentiles have received the light of the truth,—proofs that the MESSIAH is come. Behold JESUS claiming that character, and answering to it, as delineated by the prophets. Behold Him proved a true Prophet, by the accomplishment of His own predictions; and, since a *true* prophet would not set up a false claim, nor God grant a *false* prophet the token of a true one, behold Him manifested to be the CHRIST OF GOD.

That God will, in His good time, work in your hearts a sense of this, and bring your whole nation to the acknowledgment of His truth, and of DAVID your King, is not, cannot be controverted; but the dangerous situation of those individuals, who in the mean time go out of the world without owning, many perhaps blaspheming the CHRIST, under such full proof of His

His having appeared, calls on those who would not suffer sin upon a brother, to endeavour to bring you to reflection, and may plead my excuse for this Address: to which, that God may of His infinite mercy give success, and open your understandings to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of CHRIST, who is made unto us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption, and in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, is the sincere and fervent prayer of

E. W. W.



F I N I S.

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